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CAN AMERICAN HISTORY BE PUT INTO ALL COURSES IN THE HIGH SCHOOL?¹

THE educational value of history is now generally recognized, and there is a growing tendency to increase historical instruction in the primary and grammar schools. In a few years all courses of study will include American history, at least in all grades from the first to the seventh or eighth. Dr. Edward Brooks and Dr. W. T. Harris, as quoted in Baldwin's *Psychology*, place the reason-culture value of history the highest among branches of instruction. But aside from this, the practical application of American history study cannot be ignored or lightly esteemed. American history cannot be taught without correlating it with civil government and political economy, and public schools carried on with public moneys owe it as a supreme duty to the state to teach enough political science to send out boys and girls from the eighth grade who know the meaning of *e pluribus unum* and who believe that the "spoils system is utterly undemocratic." Were we now considering the grammar school, it would be proper to argue that the grammar schools could be made more useful than they are by teaching more accurately and more thoroughly the facts in regard to our government. Individual responsibility in the government, the cowardliness of governmental paternalism, the duty of obeying and enforcing the laws, the simple law of supply and demand in the commercial and financial worlds, the mutual interdependence of labor and capital—these are principles which can be grasped by ordinary eighth-grade pupils, if only the teachers themselves grasped them and believed that their pupils ought to have an understanding of them before being passed on to the high school.

¹ Proceedings of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club.

But we have in mind today the high school, and I apprehend, from an examination of high-school courses of study, that no argument is necessary here either to prove the value and the need of courses in American history and political science in the high schools. If argument were needed, a few forceful sentences from Professor Nicholas Murray Butler's address on "Democracy and Education" before the National Educational Association, at Buffalo last summer, would furnish a better argument than I can make, *e. g.*, "The divine right of kings found its correlative in the diabolical ignorance of the masses." "The educated Greek at the height of his country's development was taught to regard participation in the public service as a duty and a privilege alike." "Failure to understand the political life of a democratic state and failure to participate in it underlie those fallacies that regard the state either as a tyrant to be resisted or as a benefactor to be courted." "If education and training unfit men for political life, then there is something wrong either with our political life or with our education." "The public education, then, of a great democratic people has other aims to fulfill than the extension of scientific knowledge or the development of literary culture. It must prepare for intelligent citizenship." "I am profoundly convinced that the greatest educational need of our time, in higher or lower schools alike, is a fuller appreciation on the part of teachers of what human institutions really mean and what tremendous moral issues and principles they involve." Now, these thoughts of Professor Butler, if not intelligible to younger minds, are certainly easy to be understood by young men and women in the high school.

I fully agree with Professor Butler that to prepare for intelligent citizenship is certainly one of the aims of public education, and, again, that if our education does not prepare for intelligent citizenship, something is wrong with our education. American history and civil government—the two cannot be divorced—are not the only things a boy needs to study to make him a good citizen, but I am sure that he cannot become a good

citizen without studying these things. I come then to the subject in hand: Can American history be put into all courses in the high school? and I answer that the form of the question is a slur on our high-school courses. American history not only can be put into all courses in the high school, but it *must*. If it cannot be done, something is wrqng with our high-school courses. In my judgment, American history should have a place in every course of the high school, even if something else has to be sacrificed. But I do not think this latter alternative is necessary, for my connection with two high schools in the state has shown me that such a course can be provided, and all the requirements of the university met besides. The course of study in the Battle Creek High School includes a five-hour course in American history during the last half of the twelfth grade for all students. The course in the Saginaw East Side High School includes a two-hour course the entire senior year. For some reasons, it would be better that this course come before the last year of the high school, but on the other hand the value of the work is much greater to students more advanced in years, and if the grammar school does its duty, as I have already hinted, the high-school course in American history may well be put in the twelfth grade.

I suppose we are all thinking most of the classical course in this discussion, for nineteen out of twenty-five high schools which I know of have such a course in American history as we are talking of for some of their students. But for some reason, either because students who pursue the classical course are not expected to become good citizens, or because they are expected to learn it elsewhere, or more probably because the classical course has been considered harder than the others, American history has been left out of it. But the university's requirements can be met and are being met in all respects by some schools, and political science taught, too. I hope that as a result of this discussion an effort will be made to include it in the classical course of all high schools. Principal Marsh, in his paper before the Schoolmasters' Club last November, showed

that the high schools of this state require on an average nineteen recitations per week. This is too many. American history cannot be added to this amount. The work must be rearranged, especially that in English and mathematics, so as to give time for a two-hour or a three-hour course in political science. The Battle Creek High School requires twenty recitations a week, or did two years ago; this is too many. The Saginaw East Side High School has seventeen recitations, which is more reasonable, and includes two hours of American history in this.

I have a friend, now a junior in the University of Michigan, who graduated from one of the leading high schools of this state in the classical course. He never has studied civil government, either in the grammar school, in the high school, or in the university, and next year he will graduate from the university at the age of twenty-one with only such knowledge of our government as he has picked up by his own industry. This, I think, is not right; it is not preparing young men for intelligent citizenship, and it ought to be different.

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